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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

Action Assigned to

FROM: AMEMBASSY, GUATEMALA — DESP. NO. 914 — Action Taken

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — DATE: April 17, 1953 — APR 18 1953

REF: -- / F790004-1283 — Date of Action 4-21-53

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 16 for State, Army and Air Departments from S. - Section I

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SUMMARY

As the Foreign Ministers of the Central American countries other than Guatemala met in Costa Rica to decide on the future of the Organization of Central American States (ODECA), the Guatemalan authorities attempted to minimize Guatemala's isolation resulting from its withdrawal from ODECA and played up the Mexican Government's action in conferring a decoration on President Arbenz, as well as a message from the Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress expressing solidarity with Guatemala in defense of the "sacred principle" of non-intervention. Honduras' action in formally denouncing twelve Central American agreements signed in Washington in 1923 heightened the impression of isolation, though the Honduran action in fact preceded Guatemala's withdrawal from ODECA.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Under a banner headline reading "The Mexican People Will Always Stand by Guatemala's Side" the Communist-oriented pro-Government Nuestro Diario on April 10 reported the reply of the Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress to the Guatemalan Congress' appeal for solidarity in opposing the alleged interventionist plans of Mr. Spruille BRADEN (Weeka No. 13). The message said the Mexican Congress could not but feel itself identified with the Guatemalan nation in the defense of the sacred principles of independence, non-intervention and unwavering respect for the national will. In an editorial on April 11 the official Diario de Centro América said: "Guatemala is not alone. It can count on the powerful cooperation of Mexico."

The visit of a Mexican delegation headed by General Tomás SANCHEZ Hernández to decorate President Arbenz not only afforded opportunity for demonstrations of solidarity but [illegible] President

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an occasion to repeat the charge that Guatemala was threatened with foreign intervention. In replying to General Sánchez' non-controversial presentation speech, Colonel Arbenz referred to the several occasions on which Mexico had suffered "international vexations" in defense of its sovereignty and said that Guatemala was now withstanding the attacks of a foreign conspiracy solely for the crime of having defended its natural resources and for having a regime which, without intervening in the affairs of other countries, governed according to the dictates of justice and the sovereign will of its people. The account of this ceremony was carried by the Diario de Centro América under the heading: "Guatemala and Mexico, United". Though the Mexican gestures were in fact not connected with the ODECA affair (Mexico's Weeka No. 15), they enabled the Guatemalan Government to avoid the appearance of complete isolation.

Yet, in so far as Isthmian relations were concerned the Costa Rican and Salvadoran replies to Guatemala's note withdrawing from ODECA and the meeting of the Central American Foreign Ministers in San José to discuss the Organization's future made Guatemala look very much alone. This effect was increased by the timing of the Honduran denunciation of the Central American agreements signed in Washington in 1923. The Honduran note informing Guatemala of this action was dated March 26, before Guatemala withdrew from ODECA, but was not made public by the Guatemalan Foreign Office until April 11. According to the version released by the Guatemalans, the Honduran Government said that changed circumstances, new legislation and other inter-American agreements made the 1923 treaties inapplicable. The independent El Imparcial pointed out on April 13 that Costa Rica and El Salvador had denounced them in 1932 but asserted that the Honduran action at this moment was significant, since among other things the 1923 Treaty of Peace and Friendship prohibited intervention in case of civil war and obligated the signatories not to permit the organization on their soil of armed expeditions against one another and to abstain from secret agreements.

Despite these unfavorable relations, the Guatemalan Congress on April 15 passed a resolution asking the Congresses of the other American States to support Guatemala's protest against the inclusion of British Honduras (Belize) in the proposed British West Indian Federation. Taking note of press reports that a meeting to discuss such a Federation was being held in London, the Guatemalan Foreign Office sent a note to the British Legation protesting any change in the juridical status of Belize while it remains under dispute.

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DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Charges the anti-Communist students Mario SANDOVAL and Oscar COBAR, arrested in connection with the unsuccessful uprising at Salamá on March 29, had been given "third degree" treatment to force them to sign confessions implicating foreign governments and the United Fruit Company in the insurrection were published on April 13 by the independent newspaper Prensa Libre whose reporter allegedly bluffed his way into the courtroom at Salamá and talked with them. The students were reported as claiming they had been forced to confess that they had expected aid from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic and that the United Fruit Company had contributed $64,000 to the rebels through Sr. Carlos SIMONS, an anti-Communist leader who was until recently employed by the Tropical Radio Company, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company. Sr. Simons had taken asylum in the Honduran Embassy on April 6 and left Guatemala under safe-conduct on April 16.

Rudolf E. Schoenfeld

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